

June 12, 2019

Nora Slawik, Chair
Metropolitan Council
390 N. Robert Street
St. Paul, MN 55101

Dear Chair Slawik,

As the Minneapolis City Council Member representing the vast majority of the area where the SWLRT project is being constructed, I need to speak up and let you know there are serious problems with construction planning and communication regarding this project.

My biggest concern is that it is being communicated that Glenwood Avenue is going to be closed for two (2) years for bridge construction. Because this is a major connector between downtown Minneapolis, Bryn Mawr and North Minneapolis, it is not acceptable to take that long to rebuild this small bridge. Let me remind you the 35W bridge over the Mississippi was constructed in twelve months. Adjustments and concessions need to be made to minimize the length of time for this part of the project.

Earlier this week it was brought to my attention that on the project web page for SWLRT the headline for Glenwood Ave states the timeline is Mid/Late June yet in the body copy it mentions AS EARLY AS mid-to late June. The general public is not going to see the disclaimer and they are going to rightfully assume the closure is definite and that it is going to happen in June. This poor communication adds to confusion and frustration for people.

Even though the construction process is just beginning throughout the corridor, there are glaring examples of problems occurring. Two Fridays ago we received a phone call from a frantic constituent because they received notice from the Met Council that Burnham Road was going to be closed. Our office reached out to the SWLRT Project Office and learned that although the neighbors were noticed, work was not actually going to begin right away. This false communication was bad enough but to make matters worse, even after your staff shared with us the information was wrong they sent out emails and updated the web page with the same inaccurate information.

Another classic example and one that received media attention was regarding the parking lot across from Lee's Liquor Lounge. Met Council insisted on kicking the renter out of the space and fencing it off prior to the closing date of the bar. One month later the only use occurring here is the storage of a single construction trailer. Along these same lines, I am receiving many calls and emails from frustrated constituents and the broader community expressing annoyance that bike trails are closed yet no construction activity is occurring.

I believe the Met Council needs to take the example of how the city of Minneapolis handles construction projects and not arbitrarily close infrastructure because work will be happening at some point in the future. Leadership for the Met Council and the project office need to sit down and determine an actual and accurate construction timeline that minimizes closures and clear communication to the public. Construction causes major inconveniences for everyone trying to get around so it is imperative the Met Council work with the City of Minneapolis staff and follow some of our best practices and policies when it comes to road closures, community communication and outreach.

In closing I want to share that I have made a professional decision to reach out to you personally and not to copy in a bunch of other political people just to make a point. My hope and request is that the two of us can sit down with Robin Hutcheson, our Director of Public Works and work together to resolve these issues and concerns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Lisa", written in dark ink.

Lisa Goodman
City Council, Ward 7

cc: Robin Hutcheson, Minneapolis Director of Public Works